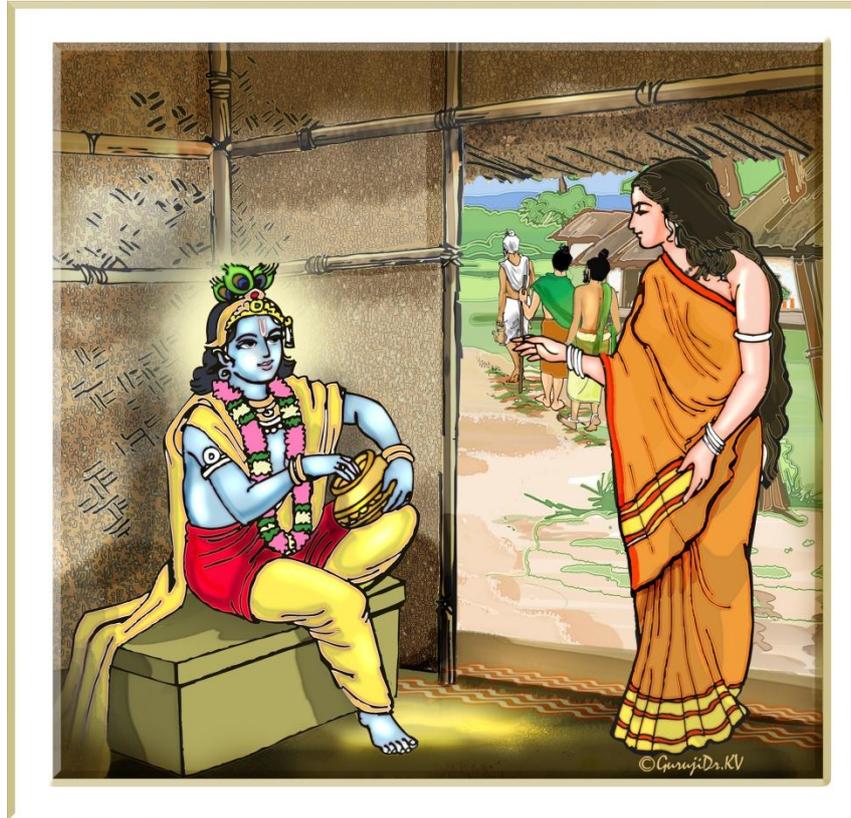


What is the Akshaya Paatra?

In Sanskrit, the word 'Akshaya Paatra' literally translates to 'inexhaustible vessel'. There are stories of this vessel in our myths and in the epic, Mahabharata. Surya, the Sun God, gifted this vessel to the Pandavas, when they were exiled for twelve years in the forest after losing in dice against the Kauravas.



This vessel would endlessly provide food, so that the Pandavas and their guests would be amply fed. However, once Draupadi had her meal, the vessel would stop serving out food. Therefore, Draupadi would be very careful to eat last, having fed all the family and guests.

The Akshaya Paatra therefore, can be seen as a metaphor for endless bounty, to be shared and enjoyed.

However, how the empty vessel also managed to satiate the world, is told simply in this story involving the tempestuous sage Durvasa.

A metaphor for the material

Once, Durvasa and his group of disciples arrived at the Pandavas' forest abode just when Draupadi had eaten. They had to be provided with a meal immediately. In a quandary, Draupadi prayed to Lord Krishna. Immediately he appeared before her, and asked her to feed him.

**“But the vessel is empty Krishna!” said Draupadi.
“Look inside the pot my dear,” said Krishna smiling.
She did, and there she found a single grain of rice, stuck to the side of the pot.
She fished it out with a ladle and offered it to the Lord.
“With this,” said Krishna, “Let the world be satiated.”**

Durvasa and his group who were sitting outside waiting to be served, immediately felt like they had eaten a full meal. In fact, they felt so full that they were afraid they would not be able to eat Draupadi’s meal. So in confusion, they left, telling their hostess that they would come another time.

On one level, this story is simple. It’s about Draupadi’s implicit belief that Krishna would help her whenever she needed it.

On another level, this story can be a metaphor about the Self. If the Paatra represents the mind, then the emptying of the vessel is all about letting go of all thoughts and experiencing just Pure Consciousness which is Pure Awareness with fullness and is complete by itself.

An empty vessel and God

Lord Krishna could have helped Draupadi by helping her provide a full meal. He did not. Instead, with that last grain, he emptied the pot, satiating the needs of the world, without providing them actual food.

What this means in a sense is that such Pure Consciousness can offer joy and happiness more than material satisfaction can. And that’s what the Akshaya Paatra stands for. Even while it, on the material plane, provides unlimited food to satiate the body, emptying it can also offer you satiation – when all, much like that last grain, is offered to the Lord.

This is nothing but a recognition of the spiritual energy that the Supreme Self can give you, if only you could recognise the link, sans all material give and take. The connection to the Self, when on a material plane, obscures the real link; however, when the material need is eliminated, the Self becomes apparent, the individual will have no more needs to satiate, experiencing Pure Consciousness or God.

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